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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, February 19, 1931.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Hints for Making Children's Clothes." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Leaflets available: "Dresses for Little Girls," and "Suits for the Small Boy."

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"Hello, Aunt Sammy, called my Next Door Neighbor from her back porch this morning. She was out, like a lady of leisure, shaking some crumbs on the snow for the birds, while I was shaking out my dust mop.

"Hello, yourself," I said. "I suppose your house was all cleaned up hours ago and I'm just in the midst of dusting my floors. My housework is behind today and it's almost time for me to have a chat with my radio friends."

"Speaking of chats, Aunt Sammy, I hope you are planning to talk about making children's clothes pretty soon. With all this mild weather we're having, the snow will soon be gone. Then it will be time to start getting my family outfitted for spring. Economy is in my bones this year, so I'm going to carry out a thrift campaign by making the new clothes myself. Now if you could give a talk that would help on this job, I'd be most grateful. And I'm sure the other housewives who sew for their children would feel the same way."

"Any suggestions for a topic?"

"Oh, yes. Lots and lots. Let's see -- Your topic might be 'Long Lives for Children's Clothes' or 'Frocks With a Future' or 'Small Suits for Service' or 'Saving Next Year's Stitches' or any number of things on the same subject. Do you follow me, Aunt Sammy?"

"Not exactly," I confessed, "though it all sounds very interesting. Anyone who can invent titles like those of yours really ought to go into advertising. But I don't quite understand what frocks with a future have to do with saving next year's stitches."

"Let me explain. It's all this matter of economy -- saving money and time in constructing garments and then making those garments so they won't need to be mended and made over from the effects of wear and tear. You may not believe it, Aunt Sammy, but it is true that I spend more time replacing buttons, sewing up seams that have ripped, facing hems and patching holes than I do in making the garment in the first place. A waste of good time and good material, I think. Now my idea is that if children's clothes were correctly cut out, fitted and made in the beginning, they could withstand normal usage. Buttons properly put on shouldn't come off during play, should they? And plackets and

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necklines shouldn't tear out even during lively games of hide-and-seek. And pockets shouldn't tear when small hands go into them or even when they hold a few marbles or bright pebbles. There must be devices in construction that can be used to make children's clothes not only attractive and comfortable, but also serviceable."

I told my neighbor that the very person to give help in matters like these is Miss Scott, the clothing specialist. As it happened, Miss Scott had just been thinking about this very subject and recently had worked out some hints on making children's clothes at home. Just the sort of hints that my neighbor or any other mother would find helpful in her sewing.

So I dropped in to see Miss Scott and learn a few things about making serviceable clothes from her. I learned a good deal. So much, in fact, that I began to wish I had some small children of my own to make sturdy play clothes for this spring.

First, Miss Scott discussed hems for little girls' dresses and small boys' blouses. For economy and long service she recommended wide hems. Using a few inches more of material on the hem may lengthen the life of a dress several years. When making a small frock, plan for the future and put in a 6 or 8-inch hem. As legs grow longer, the dress can be let down easily and the more difficult job of facing it up will not be necessary. When you are making the hem, use the sewing machine to stitch the first fold one-eighth of an inch from the edge; then turn up the hem to the proper length and simply slip-stitch it into place. Later, when it is necessary, the job of lengthening the hem will be simple enough. On small boys' clothes hems are also to be considered. A wide hem on a blouse allows for adjusting buttons when necessary. To keep these buttons from pulling out and leaving holes in the suit^{use} will tape as a reinforcement. How is it put on? Miss Scott suggests using tape one-fourth inch wide; stitching one edge of the tape to the hem edge; and then turning up the hem so that the sturdy tape is right under the spot where the buttons that support the trousers will be sewed on.

"There are some useful tricks even in putting on buttons," Miss Scott told me. "Those supporting buttons on boys' suits, that we have just been speaking of, will stay on longer if they are made firm by a baby button fastened directly underneath on the inside of the garment. When you are sewing them on, put your needle straight through from the large to the small button with the fabric between. This is a device often used to stay the large buttons on men's and women's overcoats."

Sometimes buttons are sewed so close to the garment that no room is left under the button for the material that is to be buttoned on. Two common pins, placed across the top of the button during the sewing-on process, will provide this space. Sew in and out passing the thread over the pins. Then, after making the thread secure on the under side of the garment, remove the pins, pull the button up, and then wind the thread around underneath the button to form a neck. There you have it -- plenty of room for one or two thicknesses of cloth to fit between the button and the material.

Buttonholes as well as buttons come in for consideration. Plackets often gap because buttonholes slide or are placed incorrectly. Strip buttonholes made by binding with a lengthwise strip of material, or crocheted loops are the two types of buttonholes most inclined to slide. To prevent this, place the top button at the upper end of the buttonhole and the second button at the lower end.

For play suits metal slide fastenings are convenient for the child to handle and are especially good for chilly weather clothes because they fasten so tightly that no cold air can get in. These fasteners may be purchased at department stores -- usually at the notion counter. A double fold of oilcloth or rubberized raincoat material, stitched in place under the slide fastener, will prevent any garment underneath from catching on the fastener.

Now a word about putting on patch pockets. This seems a simple matter, but actually it should be done with care and thought. Pockets often tear because they are too small, or because they are in the wrong place on the garment, or because they are not properly sewed on. There will be less strain and the pockets will be more serviceable if they are cut out large enough for the child's clenched fist to enter and withdraw easily. Then they should be placed so low that the hands cannot push down in them. It is a good idea to make pockets extra strong at the top with a piece of twill tape laid on the under side of the garment.

Double stitching, by the way, will strengthen any place on small garments where strains are likely to break the stitching. Sew twice around armholes, underarm seams, neck edges and plackets. In many places this double stitching may add to the appearance of the garment and look like a nice flat fell. Even rows of machine stitching, in contrasting color, make a simple and suitable trim for boys' washable wool suits and add to their durability. I asked Miss Scott's advice about finishing the neckline on small suits and dresses.

Collars are becoming, but they often are such a bother in laundering and are inclined to wrinkle under outside wraps. She suggested cutting out a shaped facing in the same pattern as a becoming collar and stitching it flat to the garment. It will give the same effect as an attached collar, but it will be neater, easier to make and to launder, and less trouble when coats and sweaters are being worn.

Two more very brief hints, one about plackets and one about cutting out children's panties.

First hint: Continuous plackets are the strongest and are recommended for children's clothes because they stand pulls without tearing.

Second hint: Panties cut on the bias yield without strain.

Tomorrow: "Valentine Menus."

